

Subject: Testimony in Opposition to SB 1105

My husband and I are the parents of a 9 year old boy with autism. Last year the Connecticut General Assembly passed a law that would ensure that those providing Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) in public schools or at public expense would have the training and a credential necessary to do so. This year, the State Department of Education has proposed changes to this legislation that would enable anyone one who is certified in any other area, but who do not have any training whatsoever to provide these critical services. We strongly oppose those proposed changes because the proposed legislation would be detrimental to our child and all children with autism.

Echoing the sentiments of Suzanne Letso, CEO of Connecticut Center for Child Development and a fellow parent of a child with autism, additional points to consider include: a.) the professionals identified in the language ("including, but not limited to, persons employed as psychologists, speech therapists and positions requiring certification pursuant to section 10-145b with an endorsement in special education,") Psychologists, speech therapists, and special education teachers are not usually trained to provide ABA services. If they are, then the current law would already enable them to provide ABA services; b.) there are already not enough SLP's, special education teachers and psychologists to meet CT's current educational needs so adding additional responsibilities to these professions will not meaningfully increase the number of providers; c.) without proper service delivery students with autism not only will not learn but can regress causing the cost of later treatment and lifelong care to increase. [On a personal note, school staff worked for over a year with our child to be toilet trained when he was five years old with no success; at our request and our son's doctor, school contracted with a BCBA from CREC and our child was full trained within 3 weeks. Toileting is a critical activity in daily living; the ability to toilet oneself independently automatically dramatically reduces the level of direct care needed for the individual, not to mention the decrease in the cost of sanitary supplies.]; d) supervision and direction by a designated administrator will add to the cost of providing services while decreasing the ability of qualified personnel to do their jobs.

Our child and all the other children on the autism spectrum need your help. Please support us by opposing this bill.

Sincerely yours,

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